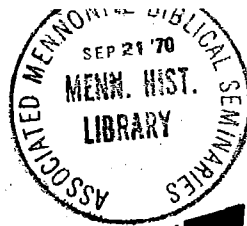


AUGUST 1970

THIS IS A  
CALL TO PRAYER  
FOR  
THE LORD'S WORK  
IN  
COLOMBIA



# COLOMBIAN NEWS

NUMBER FIFTY-SIX



Cachipay, Cund., Colombia. S. A.

INFORMATION SERVICE OF THE MENNONITE MISSION IN COLOMBIA

## TWENTY-FIVE YEARS IN COLOMBIA



Gerald and Mary Hope Stucky,  
Janet Soldner, Mary Valencia

July 10, the last day of the annual retreat in Cachipay, was set aside to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Mennonite witness in Colombia. The "four pioneers," Rev. and Mrs. Gerald Stucky, Mrs. Mary Becker Valencia, and Miss Janet Soldner, reminisced informally concerning the beginnings and early development of the schools and churches, thus beginning the happy celebration. Rev. Armando Hernández, affiliated with the work since the early 1950's and presently chairman of the church association, amplified the discussion relating personal experiences and further developments. Frequent mention was made of the police and authorities opposing the early witness. However, Rev. Hernández emphasized the Lord's guidance and blessing with "Ebenezer... hitherto the Lord has helped us." After other testimonies from representatives of the different churches Rev. Jaime Caro, pastor of the Ibagué Mennonite Church, led in the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

The evening meal was a special "chicken and rice" banquet served with anniversary cake. At the close of the meal a twenty-fifth anniversary plaque was presented to Rev. Stucky as an appreciation to the North American Mennonite churches for their witness in Colombia.



The closing service was the climax of the happy celebration with some three hundred present, representing all of the churches plus four other denominations. Rev. Stucky showed slides that presented many interesting and amusing contrasts of the "then" and "now."

Finally, Dr. Héctor Valencia, educator of the Presbyterian Church and long-time friend of the Mennonites both in Colombia and North America, gave a most appropriate anniversary message. From biblical examples, he showed how God uses fragile humans for His work as also He has in the twenty-five-year history here. He called all of us to reaffirm our faith in Christ, in the principles of the Mennonite church, and in an even more outstanding development of the work in the future. Dr. Valencia exhorted us not only to seek converts but also to prepare them for service-- serving God and man. Appropriately, the celebration closed with many volunteers responding to the call to dedicate themselves to God's will for each, as well as for the work He has given us as we face the future.

#### THUS HATH GOD WORKED

This September marks twenty-five years that the General Conference Mennonite Church has been working in Colombia. Pioneering in the work were Gerald and Mary Hope Stucky, Janet Soldner, and Mary Becker.

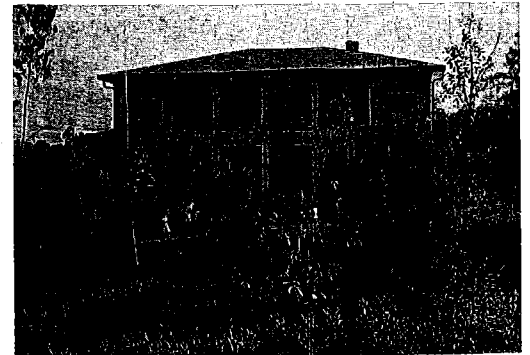
After a year of language study, they chose a picturesque site in the Andes mountains near the town of Cachipay to open a boarding school for the healthy children of leprous parents. In February 1947, a home and primary school opened its doors to about twenty children from the leper colony. Gradually children from other Protestant families were also received due to discrimination in Catholic schools. The home and school maintained a dynamic Christian atmosphere which helped many of the pupils to accept Christ as their Savior and to develop Christian qualities.



The "Pioneers" today

For many years the missionaries lived at the boarding school since an adequate staff was required to care for seventy to eighty children. From this center they carried on evangelistic efforts in the surrounding communities of Cachipay, Anolaima, and La Mesa. LaVerne Rutschman, Arthur Keiser, and Gerald Stucky dedicated much of their time and effort to the establishing of churches. Often they made their rounds on horseback or on foot. The women on the staff, although largely occupied at the boarding school, also helped with music, children's classes, and women's work in the churches. In addition, Janet Soldner was active in community nursing, especially obstetrical work.

Missionaries with intensive duties at the Cachipay school for longer or shorter periods of time were: Gerald and Mary Hope Stucky, Mary Becker Valencia, Janet Soldner, LaVerne and Harriet Rutschman, Arthur and Helen Keiser, Calvin and Sidonia Flickinger, Glendon and Reitha Klaassen, Hulda Myers Weiss, Vernelle Yoder, Bertha Reiff Neuenschwander, and Julia Schutz. Numerous voluntary service workers gave several months or years at a time. Peter and Claire Harder, although helping with the school, more particularly dedicated their time to an intensive community development program in the area.

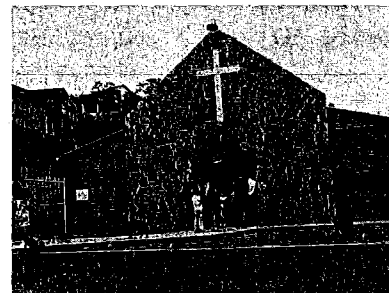


Original school and dormitory



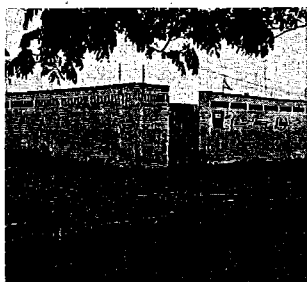
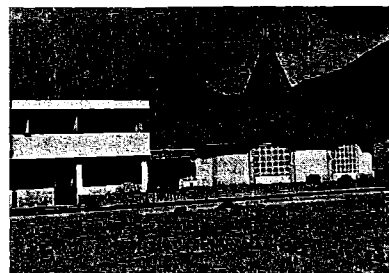
The first congregation was organized in Cachipay, and in 1952 a small church building was built and dedicated to God, having been replaced in 1961 with a larger temple as the congregation continued to grow. Colombian pastors have led the congregation most of the time, and at present two laymen, Jorge Bulla and Alfonso Castro, are sharing the responsibility.

Work was begun in Anolaima as early as 1948 by Alice Bachert through a combination of evangelistic, educational, and mid-wifery ministries. The first years were difficult ones for the young church due to civil and ecclesiastical opposition. But gradually the work prospered. Numerous Colombians contributed to the work through the years. In 1968 a lovely new church building, parsonage and Sunday School were dedicated after a church renewal through the efforts of George and Margaret Ediger.



The work in La Mesa was initiated by Alice Bachert aided by some Colombians and several missionaries. A primary school was opened and continues to function today despite several forced closures during the early years. We praise the Lord that finally after much effort on the part of Vernelle Yoder the school received government approbation. A congregation was also organized at La Mesa and in 1963 a new church building was dedicated there. This year the congregation celebrated the cancellation of its debt to Church Extension Services. Currently Polidoro Daza is its pastor.

A church was begun in Bogotá in 1964 under the leadership of Howard and Marlene Habegger. Three years later a beautiful temple, Sunday school rooms, and parsonage were constructed. Glendon and Reitha Klaassen are presently guiding the thriving congregation there. Also living and working in Bogotá are Armando and Eunice Hernández who, besides trying to begin a second congregation in the capital city, are active in extension seminary work and radio work.



Work was begun in a second city of Ibagué in 1965 by Armando and Eunice Hernández. The congregation grew rapidly and in 1967 they purchased a lot where they plan to build a church once the lot has been paid for. Jaime Caro is pastor there at present.

During the last few years several new and significant ministries have been begun. John and Elma Wiebe began a bookstore in La Mesa in 1968. In 1969 they widened their outreach by starting a "mobile bookstore" which serves churches throughout a wide area.

Since 1969 an intensified effort is being made to prepare church leaders through offering extension courses of the Medellin Seminary in our local congregations.

~~It is impossible to mention here all who have helped to make Christ known through our churches, schools, and other avenues of service. Let it be known that your efforts have not been in vain. Some have sown, others have reaped. And God has given the increase!~~



Armando, Margaret, Glen, Vernelle, Luis

## CHURCHES HOLD ANNUAL CONFERENCE

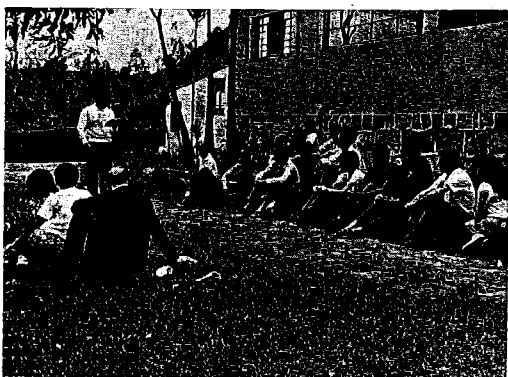
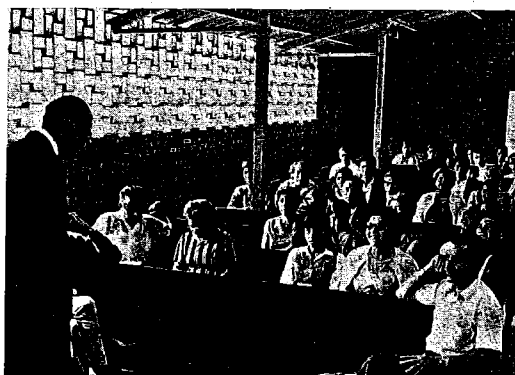
The eighteenth annual business meeting of the Mennonite churches in Colombia was held in Cachipay on July 6 and 7. Twenty-seven representatives of the churches and other institutions convened for a day and a half to report on activities of the past year and to plan future developments. A general spirit of harmony characterized the meetings.

Elections were held for the new executive committee of the Mesa Directiva which guides the Mennonite ministry in Colombia. Armando

Hernandez was reelected as president and Glendon Klaassen as executive secretary. New members to the committee are: Luis Lugo, (pastor of the Anolaima church), vice-president; Margaret Ediger, secretary; and Vernelle Yoder, treasurer. Pastors and one elected representative of each church as well as directors of each institution combine with the executive committee to make up the Mesa Directiva.

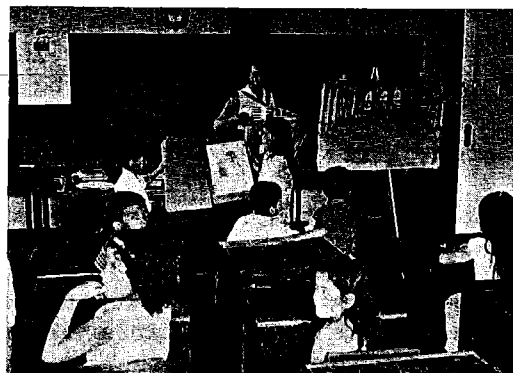
## "VICTORY IN CHRIST" RETREAT THEME

Retreats in Cachipay are nothing new. But this year July 7 to 10 were special days. An excellent spirit of Christian love and joy characterized the sessions as young and old concentrated on the meaning of "The Victorious Christian Life." Rev. Jose Rengifo from the Gospel Missionary Union work and Rev. Alfredo Torres from the World Evangelization Crusade work gave the messages and led in the discussions.



The speakers emphasized the fact that a life of victory is now possible for all because in Christ we may participate in His life and partake of His nature by the Holy Spirit. Exposition of biblical texts ably done plus contemporary illustrations made the messages and studies interesting and extremely worthwhile.

Vernelle Yoder led the children in special classes on the life of Elisha. Other important aspects of the retreat were the music and sports activities. In each there was good individual and group participation. The retreat committee, composed this year of Rev. Jaime Caro, Mr. Polidoro Daza, and Miss Virginia Terreros, needs to be congratulated for a job well done. We praise God together for new lessons learned and for victories won. We look forward to next year's retreat!



## WORKERS COME AND GO

"When the Edigers are back..." is a phrase we heard many times in the past few months. Well, the Edigers are back! All of us, missionaries and nationals, were looking forward to their return and, although they just arrived a few weeks ago, they are already "up to their ears," we might say.



George and Margaret, together with their two children, have just completed a year of furlough, which they spent studying at Elkhart and Goshen. George earned his Master of Divinity degree at Mennonite Biblical Seminary and Margaret her BA at Goshen College. We congratulate them on their accomplishments!

Now they are settling down at the school in Cachipay where Margaret will be principal and George will be general administrator. He has also been asked to help along in the Anolaima and Cachipay churches. Their primary responsibility will be with the recently developed Decentralized Bible Institute which they will direct and in which both will be teaching.

We, the missionary staff, give them a hearty welcome home and wish them much joy in their new responsibilities.



Not only do we welcome returning missionaries, but we also have to say farewell. Recently we have taken leave of Lynn Groff, Bart and Judy Sprunger, and Janet Soldner. Lynn has spent the past two years in Cachipay helping in the community development program. His future plans are uncertain except that he will probably stay with his recently widowed father for awhile. Bart and Judy have taught at the Nueva Granada, an American school in Bogotá, for two years, as well as helping along in the church in Bogotá. Even though their voluntary service term is over, they plan to return to the same position for this coming school year.

Our latest farewell went to Janet Soldner, the only one of our missionaries who has spent a full twenty-five years in service here. She worked for about twenty years at the boarding school in Cachipay as school nurse. During the last years she has been serving in various capacities helping in several different churches. She spent one year on loan to Evangelism-in-Depth directing programs among children and literacy programs on a national scale. This last



Anolaima bidding farewell

year she assisted Luis Lugo in the direction of the Anolaima congregation, during which time she endeared herself to them. Like the rest of us they were very sorry to see her go. She has asked for a leave of absence to accompany her widowed father. We have appreciated Janet's dedicated service and will be looking forward to her return.



## DOUBLE CELEBRATION IN LA MESA

April 5, 1970, was an important milestone in the life of the Mennonite church in La Mesa. It was on that day when in a special service the last payment of the church building debt was handed to Glen Klaassen, mission treasurer. Seven years ago the Church Extension Services made a ten-year loan to the congregation. Through the cooperation and faithful giving of the members this debt was canceled three years early.

At the same service Polidoro Daza, recently graduated from Bible school, was installed as pastor. He replaces John Wiebe who resigned as pastor in January in order to be able to dedicate himself full time to the rapidly growing literature ministry.



For this memorable occasion the church invited several guest speakers, Glen Klaassen, pastor of the Bogotá church, and Jaime Caro, pastor of the Ibagué church and former pastor at La Mesa. The program also included a brief history of the work in La Mesa and various special musical numbers by the young people of the church.

The service was followed by a fellowship dinner--a typical Colombian meal eaten the Colombian way with banana leaves serving as plates and fingers as forks! The general spirit of the occasion was one of genuine enthusiasm and thanksgiving to God for His twofold blessing--the cancellation of the debt and the provision of a new pastor for the church.



### CHANGING SCENE AT CACHIPAY

Since the boarding school was changed to a day school about four years ago, it has frequently been asked, "How can we best serve the Lord with this beautifully located property?" Earlier this year a plan was adopted by the Mesa Directiva, governing body of the Colombian Mennonite churches, to convert the property into a camping ground or rest center to serve the whole evangelical community in Colombia.

Vacant buildings rapidly deteriorate and much-used ones also feel the effects. Therefore a committee has made plans to remodel and build, stage by stage, to comply

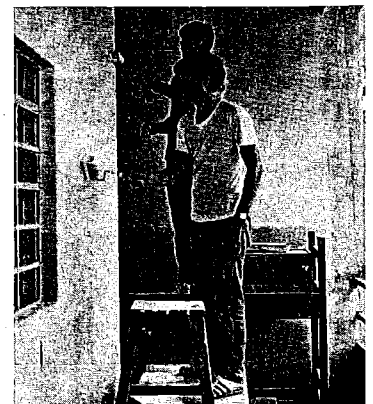
with this plan.

Stage 1: Demolish the condemned dining hall. This has been completed.

Stage 2: Remodel and reinforce the "big house" to provide dormitory space for small and large groups as well as kitchen and dining facilities for families or small groups. Being completed now.

Stage 3: Architectural plans are being drawn up to construct a large, open-type dining and kitchen area to facilitate large retreats. This for 1971.

Word spreads like fire. Already numerous requests have come to use the grounds, and one group did use the unfinished facilities. We feel that it can become a valuable place for all to "retreat" to for rest and fellowship with God and others.



Stage 2

### ARE WE STARTING A TREND?



During the last months various weddings have been celebrated in our churches. On December 24 Alfonso Castro, member of the Anolaima church and Lilia Lopez, member of the Cachipay church, were married at Anolaima, Glendon Klaassen officiating. Both are active in Mennonite work, Lilia as first grade teacher in Cachipay and Alfonso as assistant leader of the Cachipay congregation.

On July 12 Luis Correa and Fanny Gómez were united in marriage in Bogotá. Rev. Gerald Stucky officiated at the lovely double-ring ceremony. Both Luis and Fanny have been with our work for many years. Luis has studied at the seminary in Montevideo, Uruguay, and has helped in the work in various capacities. He is presently working at the "Save the Children's Fund" headquarters in Bogotá. Fanny has taught at our Cachipay school for several years. We wish both of these couples the Lord's blessing in their married life.



July 27, 1970, La Mesa, Cundinamarca

"The day dawned clear and bright, the birds were singing... a perfect setting for a wedding...." Yes, and there was a wedding! Although a month later than originally planned because of delay with legal papers, all was excitement when the day finally arrived. The morning went fast, with last-minute details, arranging flowers, (no florists around here), refitting bridesmaids' dresses, visiting the hairdresser, unexpected guests for dinner, etc. But when the hour arrived, the excitement came to a peak as the full church, plus many standing in the open doorway, waited expectantly for "Here Comes the Bride" played by Margaret Ediger. After the wedding party had entered the church, all listened attentively as John Wiebe pronounced the familiar words (but in Spanish): "Do you, Polidoro Daza, take Leona Jean Schrag, to be your lawfully wedded wife?..." The program included several lovely solos sung by a friend of the bridegroom and a short message by Rev. Jaime Caro from Ibagué. After the ceremony, the wedding party and guests went to the pastor's house where cake and punch were served and gifts were opened.



John Wiebe officiating

The radiant (although a bit tired) bride and the proud young bridegroom left for a two-day honeymoon, after which she returned to her teaching duties at Colegio Menno in La Mesa and he to his pastoral duties in the church there.

We wish Leona and Polidoro much happiness and God's richest blessings in their life and service together.

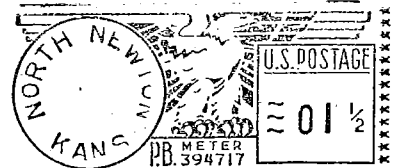


New couple with groom's mother

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#### COLLEGE STUDENTS HELP AT CACHIPAY

We are grateful to a group of students, in Colombia for the summer with the Bluffton College seminar, for their significant contribution toward the renovation plans at Cachipay. They gave three weeks of voluntary service painting the many rooms of the "big house" and breaking up and carrying away the demolished dining hall. Special thanks to: Steve Sommer, Pekin, Ill.; John Sommer, Pandora, Ohio; Lee Lehman, Berne, Ind.; Nick Driedger, Wheatley, Ont.; and Mary Ann Augspurger, Meadows, Ill.; as well as to Sally Weaver, Bluffton, Ohio, for her help on days off.



#### PRAISE AND PRAYER

PRAISE GOD for the large number who have indicated an interest in enrolling in the next semester of the Decentralized Bible Institute.

PRAISE GOD for the increase in book sales through the La Mesa bookstore and literature van (2 1/2 times the previous year).

PRAISE GOD for the return of the Edigers.

PRAISE GOD for the spirit of harmony experienced at the annual conference and retreat.

PRAISE GOD for the completion of the repair of the "big house" at Cachipay.

PRAY for the successful launching of the new retreat program in Cachipay.

PRAY for Luis Lugo as he continues alone in Anolaima since Janet Soldner's departure.

PRAY for the health of Jaime and Disney Caro's two-year-old daughter.

PRAY for Alfonso Castro and Jorge Bulla as they seek to lead the Cachipay congregation.

PRAY for the new executive committee of the Mesa Directiva as they endeavor to lead the work here according to God's plan.